

Lark Hill Community Primary School

Liverpool Street, Salford, Greater Manchester M5 4BJ

Inspection dates

25–26 April 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Actions taken by leaders and governors have not been sufficient to sustain pupils' outcomes since the last inspection. Leaders have not ensured that pupils make the gains in achievement they are capable of.
- Progress is uneven across the school and past weaknesses in teaching mean that many pupils have much ground to make up.
- The quality of teaching across the school is not consistently strong enough to secure at least good progress for pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged.
- Provision in the early years does not ensure that children learn as well as they should, especially in reading and writing.
- Despite improvements in attendance, some pupils do not attend school regularly.
- Governors, though supportive, do not challenge leaders enough.
- Some key leaders are new to their posts and others are at an early stage of developing their skills to bring about improvements in teaching.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils are not always high enough. Tasks can lack challenge and teachers accept work which is not pupils' best. Pupils are too dependent on adults and do not think for themselves.
- The curriculum motivates pupils to learn. However, leaders, including governors, do not have an accurate picture of pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- Recent changes, driven by the strong leadership of the new headteacher and supported by other senior leaders, are bearing fruit. Progress has started to speed up and standards are rising across the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective support provided.
- The most effective teaching is well planned and motivates all pupils to do their best.
- Personal development is good. Pupils are happy and are kept safe in this harmonious school community. Pupils new to the school settle well and quickly make friends.
- Parents hold highly positive views about the way the school cares for their children.
- The personal and emotional needs of pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable are especially well cared for.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching in order to rapidly improve progress so that more pupils reach at least the standard expected for their age by:
 - tackling the gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge so that they can quickly make up for learning time lost in the past
 - providing work which challenges pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, to make the best possible progress
 - ensuring that pupils try their best and present neat work free from careless errors
 - making sure that pupils have the opportunity to think things through for themselves before seeking help from an adult
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are expected to know, understand and do to improve the standards that they achieve in reading, writing and mathematics
 - continuing to share the stronger teaching that exists in the school.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing the role subject leaders play in improving the quality of teaching
 - improving the skills of governors so that they can securely hold leaders to full account for all aspects of the school's performance
 - extending the assessment system to include all subjects in the curriculum
 - improving overall attendance figures and reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent.
- Improve the progress of children in the early years so that more are well prepared for Year 1 by:
 - developing the outdoor space to support children's learning, particularly in reading and writing
 - ensuring that adults intervene more regularly to provide children, including the most able, with the appropriate challenge needed to move learning on rapidly.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders and governors have not maintained the good performance seen at the time of the previous inspection. They have not acted quickly enough to secure the improvements needed in the quality of teaching. As a result, too few pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- School leaders and governors are honest in their views that the school is not as strong as it once was. The new headteacher has an accurate view of where the school is in its development and the speed needed to address the challenges the school is facing if it is to ensure that pupils' outcomes are good.
- The priorities identified for improvement in the current year are accurate. Actions taken have had a positive impact on leadership, the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and demonstrate that the school has the capacity to continue to improve. For example, the assistant headteachers are leading improvements in the quality of teaching through the provision of carefully tailored training and support for staff. Senior leaders hold teachers firmly to account for the progress made by pupils.
- Effective training and support is enabling middle and subject leaders to contribute more fully to improving the quality of teaching for the subjects they lead. However, senior leaders are aware that checks on pupils' progress in curriculum subjects other than English and mathematics are at an early stage.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders ensure that new staff, including teachers new to the profession, are quickly brought up to speed about the school's approach to safeguarding and teaching. Recently qualified teachers say that they are very well supported in the start that they have made to their new careers.
- The pupil premium funding is being used increasingly well, particularly to aid pupils' social and emotional well-being. It is supporting the engagement of families, including those of pupils who find it difficult to attend school regularly. Disadvantaged pupils are beginning to make faster progress and gaps in learning are diminishing, but there is more to do.
- Leadership of the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is effective. Resources are of a good standard and staff have a good understanding of pupils' learning, personal and welfare needs. Every effort is made to remove any barriers to learning. Checks on the impact of actions take place regularly. This ensures that pupils with SEN and/or disabilities make good gains in their learning from their starting points.
- The curriculum offers a range of experiences which capture pupils' interests well. Enrichment opportunities, including trips, for example to Chester Zoo, help bring the curriculum to life. The school grounds are used well. Some pupils are supported by volunteers to gain a qualification in wood-working, for example. Gardening and chess clubs are popular and well attended.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils respect other faiths and cultures and reflect on ethical issues maturely. Leaders ensure that British values are promoted well. Pupils are taught to respect other peoples' views and to value

differences. They develop a good understanding about how democracy works and they learn about major world religions.

- The physical education and sport premium funding is used to good effect. Specialist teaching and coaching are helping to develop pupils' skills in a range of sports across the school.
- Effective systems make sure that pupils new to the school, including those who arrive speaking very little English and/or with little information about their previous education, are made welcome and get off to a good start. Staff diligently make sure they pass on achievement information when pupils move to other schools.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have the full commitment of staff, parents and pupils. All are determined that the school will continue to improve. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong.
- The local authority has provided and brokered effective and proportionate support for the school. Specific training, for example with ensuring that teachers accurately judge pupils' progress and attainment, has made a positive contribution to the school's drive to improve.

Governance of the school

- Governors have not been effective in ensuring that pupils achieve as well as they should.
- Governors have asked searching questions of school leaders in all areas of school life except the achievement of pupils. In part, this is because the information they were given was not always precise enough or provided in a consistent format fully understood by governors. The governing body did not have a thorough understanding of the national averages for pupils' attainment. As a result, governors have not consistently insisted on the highest academic expectations for pupils.
- Governors are conscientious in their responsibilities and supportive of school leaders. They enjoy taking part in, and contributing to, the life of the school. They diligently carry out their statutory duties relating to safeguarding.
- The governing body ensures that additional funding, including the pupil premium funding, is deployed appropriately.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Well-organised safeguarding and child protection systems are in place and are well understood by staff. Appropriate training is undertaken, including that related to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism. There is a clear message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- The inclusion manager and pastoral team have cultivated strong, supportive relationships with parents and other agencies. Staff provide very effective support for pupils' personal, social and emotional development. The care and welfare of vulnerable

pupils and their families are a strength of the school.

- The curriculum is well developed to help pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. Pupils are taught to manage the risks facing them in their life beyond the school gates, including when using the internet and mobile technology.
- Pupils are adamant that they feel safe in school. The overwhelming majority of parents who spoke to inspectors said that the school cares well for their children.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because it is inconsistent across the school. Over time, teaching has not always been effective. This is because teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have been too low and the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics have not been taught systematically.
- The quality of teaching has some strengths but it is not consistently strong enough to overcome the below average and sometimes low starting points of pupils nor bridge the gaps in their learning caused by earlier weaknesses in teaching. At times, for example, teachers miss the opportunity to ensure that pupils make the progress of which they are capable because the level of challenge is not high enough. As a result, too many pupils do not reach the standard expected for their age or do better than this.
- Actions taken by senior leaders since the start of this academic year are bringing about improvements in teaching. Teachers' skills are sharpened through targeted support and training and regular opportunities to learn from the strongest teaching that exists in the school. As a result, the quality of teaching, particularly in reading and mathematics, is proving more effective and pupils have begun to make faster progress from their starting points.
- Analysis of pupils' work shows that, increasingly, literacy and mathematical skills are being developed across a range of subjects. However, too few opportunities are provided to enable pupils to build up their stamina to be able to sustain their ideas when they write at length. At times, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and do in lessons are not high enough. As a result, pupils produce less work than they could and present work that is untidy and littered with careless spellings and inaccurate grammar and punctuation.
- Pupils' basic mathematical skills are developing well. Regular opportunities are offered for pupils to draw on these skills when they perform calculations. Problem-solving opportunities are beginning to build up pupils' reasoning and thinking skills, but leaders know there is more to do to develop these skills further.
- Phonics sessions led by teachers and teaching assistants, particularly in the early years and key stage 1, are well planned, drawing on the content of recent training. They successfully help pupils to understand and use letters and to know the sounds that they represent. However, pupils, particularly those in the older classes, and including those new to speaking English, have much ground to make up. As a result, some do not have a rich enough bank of vocabulary or grammatical knowledge to use when

they write independently.

- Warm relationships between adults and pupils are evident throughout the school. A significant number of pupils join and leave the school throughout the year. Teachers quickly identify new starters' needs and help them settle into class.
- Additional adults are well deployed. They provide a good standard of support to all pupils, including pupils with SEN and/or disabilities and those with social and emotional needs.
- Classrooms and learning spaces are well organised. Many displays celebrate pupils' work and help to support their learning and development.
- The good relationships between staff and pupils in the school are a strength. Leaders passionately believe in fostering respectful relationships in school. There is a strong sense of nurture, where pupils, including those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable, feel safe and secure and ready to learn.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school provides a safe, nurturing environment to enable pupils to thrive personally, socially and emotionally.
- Staff treat pupils with the utmost consideration and ensure that the school makes everyone feel welcome and valued. Pupils new to the school, including international new arrivals and those new to speaking English, are made very welcome and settle quickly. Pupils show high levels of respect for each other and the adults who care for them.
- Pupils show a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy through sensible eating and regular exercise.
- Pupils have a good awareness of the different types of bullying, including online bullying. They say bullying seldom occurs and that they trust adults to deal with any incidents promptly and fairly.
- Pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school and enjoy taking on responsible roles, such as student council members.
- Pupils are happy to talk about their learning and the care provided for them by school staff. Pupils told inspectors how proud they were of their school and how they were well looked after by adults.
- The popular breakfast club provided for pupils gets the day off to a good start and has contributed to improved attendance rates.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement because pupils do not consistently adopt positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils generally listen carefully to their teachers and teaching assistants and many settle quickly to work when asked to do so. However, at times pupils are much too dependent on an adult. They seek reassurance about what they have been asked to do rather than taking responsibility and thinking for themselves before seeking help.
- Pupils' work often contains careless spelling and grammatical errors and, at times, some pupils are capable of producing more work in lessons. As a result, pupils are not consistently making the best possible progress.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in class and around school. They are polite and well mannered. The school is a calm and orderly place of learning. Pupils of all ages get on well together during breaktimes. Leaders are aware that pupils would like more to do in the playgrounds at lunchtime.
- The traffic light system used to flag up behaviour that is not good enough is well understood by all. Pupils think that the adults apply the school rules fairly. Points are awarded for good behaviour and learning. Pupils enjoy visiting the 'rewards shop' to exchange their points for prizes.
- Those pupils who have difficulty managing their own behaviour are helped to do so, sensitively and skilfully, by the adults.
- The system for checking attendance is rigorous and well organised. The need for regular attendance has a high profile and most pupils understand how important it is to be punctual for school. Overall attendance is improving, but too many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are persistently absent.
- Exclusion rates have improved from previously high levels and are now similar to the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Progress over time has varied since the previous inspection. It is currently uneven across the school.
- The improved progress seen at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 was not sustained in 2017. As a result, pupils' progress at the end of Year 6 was below average. Standards were much lower than the national average in reading, writing and mathematics and very few pupils were working at a higher standard. Too few pupils were well prepared for the next stage of their education at the end of key stage 2.
- The attainment of pupils at the end of key stage 1 in 2017 was higher than in 2016 in all subjects. However, the school's result in writing remained significantly below the national average. Few Year 2 pupils were working at greater depth in any subject.
- Outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check have steadily improved in recent years. Almost all pupils reach the expected standard by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils' books and the school's performance information show that the achievement of

pupils currently in the school is moving in the right direction. Pupils are making faster progress and standards at Lark Hill are rising.

- Despite these positive headlines, pupils' outcomes, including for the most able and pupils who are disadvantaged, require improvement. Progress rates vary across the school and gaps remain in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Improved teaching is helping pupils catch up, but many, particularly in the older classes, continue to carry a legacy of underachievement. For example, despite their improved progress this year, the attainment of too many of the current Year 6 pupils is well below that expected for their age, particularly in writing.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make at least the progress expected of them and some do better than this because of well-targeted support.
- A significant number of pupils join the school at other than the usual time. The needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are identified quickly and support is provided. Others arrive with gaps in their learning, sometimes caused by previous poor attendance. Overall, these pupils make similar progress to other pupils in the school.
- Many of the pupils who speak English as an additional language are at an early stage of speaking English when they join the school. Progress is strong for this group and pupils make good gains from their starting points.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Early years requires improvement because too few children are well prepared for the next stage of their education in Year 1.
- Children join the school with low and sometimes very low starting points. Over time, too few children, including those who are disadvantaged, make the rapid progress needed to reach or exceed the expected standard for their age by the end of Reception. Children's skills, particularly in reading and writing, have not been developed well enough. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development has remained stubbornly below the national average for a number of years.
- Leadership of the early years has a clear view of the strengths of the setting and areas requiring development. Checks on how well children are doing provide the basis for planning a range of activities that capture children's interests and develop most aspects of learning. However, teaching is not focused precisely enough on children's reading and writing learning needs. This prevents children, including the most able, from making the best possible progress in these aspects of the curriculum.
- The early years classrooms are bright and attractive. They offer a broad range of resources that children are able to access independently. However, sometimes activities are not sufficiently well supervised to encourage children to learn as intended. At times, children simply explore the activities on offer and adults miss opportunities to prompt conversation, to develop children's vocabulary, to model skills and to further children's learning.
- Children enjoy playing together in the large outdoor area and they are eager to learn. However, too few opportunities are provided in this space to enable children to build

on learning sessions led by their teachers. In addition, at times, adults stand back and supervise children's play rather than engaging with them to make sure that learning is purposeful.

- Learning in the Cherry Room, which caters for children with severe and/or complex SEN and/or disabilities, is well supported by knowledgeable staff. They effectively model language, learning and behaviour for children who attend this provision. As a result, children make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Relationships between adults and children are good and children are well cared for and safe. Children are happy. They play together well, take turns and share toys. Children listen carefully to the adults and follow instructions quickly and sensibly.
- Staff in the early years are vigilant and have a very good awareness of safeguarding issues. They make sure that the early years statutory welfare requirements are met. Partnerships with external agencies are well developed to enable staff to access further support for children when necessary
- Parents hold highly positive views of the early years provision. Children new to the school, including those at an early stage of speaking English, are helped to settle quickly. Staff are working closely with those families who sometimes find it difficult to ensure their children attend school regularly.

School details

Unique reference number	132147
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	10045120

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	540
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Harry Almond
Headteacher	Andrew Earl
Telephone number	01619 211 390
Website	www.larkhillprimary.co.uk
Email address	larkhill.primaryschool@salford.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 September 2013

Information about this school

- The school has significantly increased in size since the previous inspection. It is now much larger than the average-sized primary school. Following a building programme to increase the number of classrooms, the school grew to three classes in most year groups in September 2016. The number of pupils on roll increased by nearly a half at that time and teaching, support and ancillary staff numbers rose by around a third.
- Children attend the Nursery and Reception classes full time. Since the previous inspection, the school has increased its admission range to cater for two-year-olds, although there is currently none on roll.
- A much higher than average proportion of pupils join and leave the school at other than the usual times. Since the start of this academic year, 79 pupils have joined the school and 54 have left. In the current Year 6, less than half of pupils joined the school at the usual time. Around a quarter of the new arrivals come with no prior attainment information.

- The school provides specialist provision, partly funded by the local authority, for children with complex and/or severe SEN and/or disabilities. Known as the Cherry Room, the 10 places in this provision are allocated to children in the early years and Year 1 who attend the school.
- Almost half of the pupils are of White British heritage, with a small proportion of pupils from a wide number of different minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Almost half the pupils speak English as an additional language. This is above the national average and higher than that seen at the previous inspection. The majority of these pupils join the school at an early stage of speaking English.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is more than double the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is high.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of SEN or an education, health and care plan is above average.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant turbulence in staffing, including in the senior leadership team. Over half of the current staff were not working at the school at the time of the previous inspection. A significant proportion of the new teaching posts established when the school expanded were teachers new to the profession. The headteacher left the school in May 2017 and the deputy headteacher became acting headteacher. He was appointed to the substantive role of headteacher in February 2018. A member of the senior leadership team took on the role of acting deputy headteacher in May 2017 and left the school at the end of the spring term in 2018. Two assistant headteachers also left at this time. The current acting deputy headteacher took up her post a week before the inspection. The governors were holding interviews for two new deputy headteachers during the inspection week.
- The school provides a breakfast club for its pupils.
- The school is a member of the local cluster of schools. The school receives support brokered by Salford local authority, including from the headteacher of the local Willow Tree Primary School.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. Learning was observed in all classes and when pupils learned in small groups. An inspector observed learning taking place in the school grounds. Inspectors made joint observations with the headteacher and acting deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors checked the safety of the school premises at different times of the school day. They observed arrangements for pupils' arrival at school.
- The inspectors talked with pupils informally as they played at breaktimes, visited the dining hall at lunchtime and observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school. They met formally with four groups of pupils, including two pupils who showed an inspector around the school.
- Inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and talked to them about it. They listened to pupils read and observed the teaching of reading skills. Pupils talked to inspectors about the books that they have enjoyed and those that they are currently reading.
- Inspectors held a number of meetings with the headteacher to consider his review of the school and the plan for improvement. Inspectors spoke with all senior leaders and met with middle and subject leaders and other members of staff.
- An inspector met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors.
- An inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day. They took account of 33 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 22 comments provided for inspectors. Inspectors also took account of 61 responses to the staff questionnaire, 21 responses to the pupils' questionnaire and the school's most recent surveys of pupils' and parents' views.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents, including information about pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and external views of the school. They reviewed the contents of the school's website and scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

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